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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the emergence of a corporate work-family agenda into historical and organizational context. The paper discusses the forces that have influenced both the prevalence and nature of a corporate response to family concerns over time, and trends noticeable in the efforts of some companies to create family-friendly policies and programs. The paper proceeds with a theory of stages describing the evolution of companies' work-family agendas and the juncture of issues that presently define the field. The evolution of work-life initiatives is described as developing from grassroots efforts through human resources departments to culture change and work redesign. The role of the community in bringing about this evolution is considered. This discussion is intended to provide a framework for understanding the progress and likely direction of corporate initiatives in the work and family area. Two appendices present tables of the prevalence of work-family programs in companies and the four stages of evolving focus of work-life initiatives. (JPB)

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Moving from Programs to Culture Change: The Next Stage for the Corporate Work-Family Agenda

by

Dana E. Friedman

and Arlene A. Johnson

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Introduction

Sweeping changes in work, workers, families, institutions and communities have given life to a new functional title in human resources, a new kind of consultant, a new program area for foundations, and a new academic focus—in short, a new field known as work-family or work-life. A variety of disciplines and sectors are represented among those in this emerging field. Over the years, individuals from a variety of backgrounds and sectors have seen the connections and barriers between work and family needs and responsibilities and championed the cause of work-life integration from a variety of perspectives. Over the years, too, the scope of concern has moved from child care to a broader array of work-family issues, and even beyond issues directly related to families—a change reflected in the increasing usage of the more inclusive term, work-life.[1] As an example of this movement, in 1996 the Association of Corporate Child Care Consultants, Inc. changed its name to the Alliance of Work-Life Professionals.

In addition to assuming a broader scope, in recent years work-family advocates have recognized the need to move beyond programs and policies to address the work environment and the way work is done. This expanded focus acknowledges peoples needs for a sense of control and meaning in their work as part of the equation for integrating work and personal life.

This paper will put the emergence of a corporate work-family agenda into historical and organizational context. First, we shall discuss the forces that have influenced both the prevalence and nature of a corporate response to family concerns over time. Next, we shall discuss trends noticeable in the efforts of some companies to create family-friendly policies and programs. The paper proceeds with a theory of stages describing the evolution of companies work-family agendas and the juncture of issues that presently define the field. This discussion is intended to provide a framework for understanding the progress and likely direction of corporate initiatives in the work and family area.

[1] While the terms work-family and work-life are today often used interchangeably, this paper uses the term work-family since there are particular implications for the family that are emphasized later in the chapter.

Historical Context

From colonial times through the recent past, the line between work and family was nonexistent. In a primarily agrarian society, women were important contributors to the domestic economy. Once production moved to the factories and cities, men were the sole breadwinners while most women continued to work at home with sole responsibility for housework and child rearing, devoid of any paid economic functions. With the division of labor, came the separation of work and family.

When national emergencies arose, the line between work and family life blurred. For instance, during the Civil War and World War I, some employers opened temporary child care centers so that women could be employed to meet worker shortages. World War II gave rise to another round of employer-sponsored centers, which had support from the Federal Government. In 1940, Congress passed the Lanham Act and other amendments that encouraged the creation of community-based child care programs in defense plant areas to help the war effort.

After World War II, the workforce was replenished by returning servicemen, many women returned home, and industry's interest in child care lay dormant until the 1960s. In 1967, legislation created the opportunity for rapid tax amortization of construction on child care centers for employees children. The demand resulting from an influx of women into the labor force prompted widespread interest in child care as a potentially profitable investment. Child care did not take hold as a major issue in the 1970s, however. There was a mild flurry of activity, which came under the guise of corporate social responsibility rather than a bottom-line enhancement for business.

The post-war years held no strong competition from overseas. This created a sense of complacency in American business. But by the 1980s, companies were being accused of being fat and inefficient. Competitive pressures from Europe and Japan called for sweeping changes in business organizations. Productivity increases could no longer come from hiring more people, but from getting more productivity from each person hired. To reduce the fat, major corporations began their first round of layoffs in the mid-1970s.

In the mid-1980s, the U.S. Department of Labor released a report called *Workforce 2000*. It warned business about the significance of demographic shifts in the population and how these shifts would affect recruitment and retention efforts. The predictions of an increasingly diverse labor market comprised of women, minorities and aging workers gave business the most explicit rationale to date for addressing work and family concerns. Many business leaders were particularly alarmed that only 15 percent of net new entrants into the workforce by the year 2000 would be white males.

Other facts about the prevalence of working mothers, widely shared throughout the business community, made them take note. For example, two-thirds of mothers with school-age children were in the paid labor force, and 54 percent of mothers with infants were employed outside the home. These and other related statistics began to raise worrisome questions in the business community about corporate and welfare policies and what the best strategy might be for helping children get a good start in life. At the same time, a growing number of companies began to be concerned about a "glass ceiling" that not only prevented burgeoning numbers of women from entering senior management ranks but also prevented companies from amortizing their investment in women's recruitment and training. Worksite research pointed to work-family conflict as a contributor to women's unequal and shorter career ladders.

Some were skeptical about business involvement in family issues, assuming or hoping that these phenomena were demographic blips that would eventually fade. However, the *National Study of the Changing Workforce*,[2] a nationally representative survey of U.S. workers, found that work-family concerns are hardly a marginal or shrinking concern. In 1992, 87 percent of the U.S. workforce went home to a family member or significant other at the end of the workday. Furthermore, 47 percent of workers have dependent care responsibilities. The 8 percent of these employees who have primary responsibility for elder care is likely to increase dramatically in the years ahead as baby-boomers assume responsibility for their aging parents.

[2] Ellen Galinsky, James T. Bond and Dana E. Friedman, *The Changing Workforce: Highlights of the National Study*. Families and Work Institute: New York, 1993.

A New Focus

Today's workplace environment differs from that of twenty years ago. Workers and their families are more diverse than ever before and organizations must be more flexible and adaptable to compete in a fast-paced global economy. It is not uncommon for companies to have recurring bouts of cost-cutting, restructuring, reinventing and reengineering, resulting in layoffs and tremendous upheaval in the lives of families and the communities in which they live.

From the latter half of the 1980s through the present day, widespread downsizing among large corporations has led many to repeatedly question whether work and family issues will be moved to the back burner. What has happened, however, is the opposite: work-family programs are flourishing, and work-family issues are garnering greater visibility than ever before. A 1991 benchmarking study by the Families and Work Institute found that the strongest predictor of corporate family friendliness is change—a downsizing, a merger or a replacement of the CEO.[3] Reasons for the growth of work-family initiatives in the early 1990s, during this period of corporate upheaval, varied. One reason was company concern over the morale of employees surviving a downsizing, who now had to handle more responsibility with less support. Business has traditionally viewed the provision of inexpensive dependent care initiatives and flexibility as a way to ease the pain of layoffs and show support for the survivors.

During this period of dramatic change in the composition of the workforce, companies also focused on managing diversity. Corporate managers of affirmative action realized that just because their companies may have met acceptable standards of hiring women and minorities, they weren't necessarily successful in promoting these people. The proliferation of diversity programs has given a boost to work-family programs, although the two initiatives are rarely integrated or coordinated. Furthermore, some have come to realize that addressing diversity, like addressing work-family concerns, is less about developing policies and programs than it is about creating a supportive work environment and effective work practices.

[3] Ellen Galinsky, Dana E. Friedman, and Carol A. Hernandez, *The Corporate Reference Guide to Work-Family Programs.* Families and Work Institute: New York, 1991.

Another reason for the recent growth of work-family initiatives relates to critical mass. It has become difficult for employers to ignore more than 20 years of research and experience in the area of work and family. Many large companies now have highly publicized work-family initiatives or efforts that are underway. Work-family issues have been the subject of eight years of annual conferences by The Conference Board, a business think tank, as well as countless other conferences, seminars, and workshops sponsored by nonprofit, government, academic and business trade organizations. The U.S. Department of Labor created a work-family clearinghouse in 1989 for anyone interested in corporate success stories. Numerous other state and city agencies have recently created work-family task forces or education campaigns. Passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act thrust into the limelight the problems with how companies were dealing with pregnancy, parenting, adoption and family illness. Other legislation and regulations regarding labor laws and benefits also focused attention on work-family issues.

In fact, an entire work-family industry has formed and continues to grow. Many benefits and management consulting firms have developed a work-family practice area. Hundreds of companies now employ designated work-family managers, thereby adding a new job description within corporate human resources and creating a market for work-family conferences and on-line services. A wide range of organizations have developed newsletters, forums, awards and training products to promote awareness and change. The media has covered it all, moving discussions about the balance between work and family from the *Ladies Home Journal* to the *Wall Street Journal* in a weekly column devoted exclusively to work and family issues.

In this period of rapid change, one can discern patterns among the steps that employers take to address work-family concerns.

Current Efforts of Companies to Address Family Concerns

The very first initiatives in the work-family arena were shaped by child care advocates. An elder care focus in the late 1980s resulted in terminology related to dependent care. Soon after work-family became an accepted frame of reference, concerns about equity and backlash led to the term work-life, to include single people and those not in traditional families.

For each segment of the work population in need of some kind of work-family support, companies typically hire a consultant, conduct a needs assessment, and develop a set of policies and programs that will address identified needs. Company actions cluster into five different types of initiatives: information and counseling; financial assistance; products and services; time-off policies; and organizational development activities. The relative prevalence of these policies and programs among large corporations is depicted in Table 1: Prevalence of Work-Family Programs in Companies.

Although the work-family field began with a preoccupation with on-site child care centers, Table 1 demonstrates that only a small proportion of employers actually pursued that option. This is because there is significant cost in establishing and managing a center, not all employed parents can be served by a center (especially at multi-site companies) and many employees prefer home- or neighborhood-based child care instead. However, it is notable that the number of employers offering on-site child care is slowly growing, and the child care companies hired to manage them are increasingly sophisticated in the range of employer and family services they offer. In addition, a growing number of employers have created multiple centers as a result of the positive effect sponsored child care has on the company.

Not surprisingly, resource and referral networks, designed to assist large numbers of employees with dependents, are significantly more popular among employers than other forms of support that tend to be more costly or serve fewer employees. In the early 1980s, large companies began organizing referral services by contracting with local, community-based resource and referral agencies. When large multi-site companies became interested in setting up referral networks, national vendors of referral services contracted with local referral agencies or created

centralized databases of services. As child care and elder care referrals have broadened to include counseling services on a range of employee needs and interests, some companies and some vendors have begun to merge their referral services with Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). With the advent of managed care in the mental health field, there are likely to be further changes in EAPs.

Many companies have also redesigned their benefits packages in order to keep abreast of changes in the demographics of the workforce. For example, cafeteria plans take into account that employees needs change in the course of their lifetimes. Under such plans, employees make choices about benefits that they can change over time. Another example of a new benefit springing from changing demographics is financial assistance for dependent care, which is available through company-sponsored voucher programs or Dependent Care Assistance Plans (DCAPs). DCAPs were made possible by changes in the 1981 Economic Recovery Tax Act, which made dependent care a nontaxable benefit to employees. As a result, companies are able to offer financial assistance to employees by letting them pay with pretax dollars for the child and elder care services they use. To this day, this is the most popular form of corporate support for dependent care because the government absorbs the cost.

Of all the options listed in Table 1, clearly flexible time arrangements and leaves of absence are the most popular. Many of these initiatives were already in place before a focus on work and family issues emerged. Like many other policies enumerated here, they may be formal, written policies, but their practice is generally determined case by case (i.e., at the discretion of individual managers).

Table 1 lists what might be considered core programs of a corporate work-family agenda. However, several other kinds of work-family initiatives are becoming increasingly popular, demonstrating a broadening corporate interest in dependent care and an increased corporate focus on both the community and the work environment:

- *School-age child care:* Employers are recognizing that lack of, or inadequate, arrangements for school-age children not only contributes to employees distraction, stress and absenteeism, but is also detrimental to society, which eventually pays the price in the increased likelihood of juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and learning problems. A growing number of programs help parents find quality care and enrichment for children after school and during school holidays.

- *Short-term and emergency child care:* Employee surveys show that emergency child care problems (e.g., when the child care provider is sick or when regular

arrangements temporarily break down) are an ongoing concern for parents, as well as a source of unpredictable and costly absences for employers. Accordingly, businesses have shown a surge of interest in emergency child care centers—even in urban locations that would never have otherwise considered building a full-time child care center.

- *Elder care:* Despite employers oft-stated intention to address employees elder care needs, the actual picture is one of slower-than-expected progress. A handful of firms have created on-site adult day care centers, which are used largely by community residents unrelated to employees. Employees participate in and appreciate referral programs and informational seminars, but employers are frustrated by a national delivery system of services designed for the aged and not the caregiver. As baby-boomers get older, the elder care needs of their parents will be both more visible and prevalent. Those in leadership positions are likely to support an increased focus on elder care needs as they themselves experience dependent care problems with their aging parents and loved ones.

- *Assisting low-income workers:* With fewer financial resources and, therefore, fewer options, low-income workers are especially subject to work-family stress but do not benefit proportionately from the increase in work-family programs. The *National Study of the Changing Workforce* found that the lower a persons income, the less likely he or she is to have access to family-supportive benefits such as dependent care or flexible work arrangements. This is likely to become a major topic of company discussion and a focus for public-private partnerships.

- *Dependent care development funds:* A small but growing number of companies are designating a sum of money for investment in the improvement of community services for dependent care in communities where their employees live. The money may be from the corporate foundation, but just as often it comes from human resources operating budgets. These funds are a natural next step for companies that offer dependent care resource and referral programs, whose effectiveness depends on the adequacy of services in the community.

- *Corporate collaboration:* Acknowledging that they can do more together than any one company can do separately, employers are coming together to share information and to create programs and services. The largest such collaboration—The American Business Collaboration—was launched in September 1992, when 137 organizations across the country collaborated to invest $25 million to improve the supply and quality of dependent care programs in 44 communities where their employees live. To date, the collaborative has supported more than 750 dependent care projects in 66 communities, ranging from summer camps to transportation programs for employees elderly dependents.

- *Community mobilization*: Employers are also becoming more active in community efforts to improve local services. They may sit on city or state task forces with other

stakeholders, identifying problems and creating workable solutions in areas such as child care, educational reform, or family support systems.

- *Flexible work arrangements:* Flexibility is not only the most desired but also the most elusive of work-family benefits. Despite the prevalence of policies for part-time and alternative work arrangements, the corporate culture often regards employees who use these policies as uncommitted and unpromotable. It is now widely acknowledged that closing the gap between policy and practice requires addressing manager attitudes and re-positioning flexibility, not as an employee accommodation, but as a management tool and a mainstream alternative for getting the work done. A growing number of companies see flexibility as both the ultimate test of family-friendliness and a powerful lever for integrating work-family concerns into job processes and everyday operations.

The past decade has produced literally hundreds of different kinds of family-supportive corporate programs, ranging from lactation support programs and beepers for expectant fathers working in remote locations to concierge and on-site convenience services for busy families, to name only a few. Assessments of employee need have identified sources of work-family stress and programs for reducing them. But as the number of programs has grown, so also has the realization that a proliferation of programs does not by itself address fundamental work-family issues.

Recognizing the Work Environment as a Work-Family Variable

One of the most significant changes in the course of recent corporate attention to family issues is the realization that even the best and most innovative policies and programs have limited value for people who work in an unsupportive culture. The impact is limited if a company promulgates a flexible work arrangement policy, but few feel free to use it. Recent research points to the work environment and the nature of the job as being at the core of successful work-family integration.

In the *National Study of the Changing Workforce*, workers who had started a new job within the past two years were asked to name the factors they considered most important when taking on that job. The most popular answer was open communications. The second most important factor was the effect of the job on family life. The nature of work, the quality of management and the relationship with supervisors followed. Wages and salary were 16th on the list.[4] When asked

[4] The Changing Workforce, ibid., p. 17.

the open-ended question How do you define success at work? more than half of the respondents said doing a good job and getting respect from supervisors. These answers support the conclusion that employees are motivated more by intrinsic factors than extrinsic benefits and services.

A study at IBM adds a new dimension to this observation: employees say that their decisions to take a job at IBM and to continue working there depend more on aspects of the corporate culture, than salary and benefits. For instance, out of 16 different options, IBM employees picked the effect of the job on work-family balance as 12th on the list of what influenced the decision to take a job at IBM. When asked to name the factors most important to inducing them to stay at IBM, the effect of the job on work-family balance moved to sixth place. And among the top performers in the company, work-family balance was the second most important factor in deciding whether they would stay with IBM.

The nature of the job and the workplace environment are critical for balancing work and personal life. Independent corporate studies conducted by the Families and Work Institute repeatedly have shown that employees with more autonomy in their jobs and more social support from supervisors, co-workers and the workplace culture report less work-family conflict, less stress, and more effective coping than other workers. Job autonomy and workplace support were also found to correlate with employees degree of commitment to their work and to their interest in having the company succeed.[5] These findings were corroborated by an evaluation of Johnson & Johnson's comprehensive work-family initiative, in which support from supervisors and workplace culture proved to have a positive and independent impact on employees perceptions of work-family balance. Employees who believe that their supervisors are supportive of and responsive to their family needs also admit to feeling better about themselves, about their jobs, and about their ability to keep work and family from negatively affecting one another. The findings were similar for employees who experience a supportive workplace culture.

While work-family programs are not sufficient in themselves to create a sense of work-family well-being, there is no question that work-family programs are necessary to help people deal with work-family stress, and that they help to convey a supportive culture. For those employees who have access to family-responsive policies, there appears to be a positive, measurable effect on employees reading of the culture and on their commitment to the

[5] The Changing Workforce, ibid., p. 101.

company. Users of work-family policies are also more likely to support reorganization efforts and total quality initiatives. A study at Fel-Pro, a mid-sized, Illinois-based manufacturing company, found that the company's extensive work-family initiative creates a culture of mutual commitment between employer and employee. . . [and] provides a foundation on which to implement organization changes that require substantial employee involvement.[6]

The *National Study of the Changing Workforce* revealed that the strongest predictors of both family well-being and work-family conflict as well as job satisfaction and discretionary effort are related to the work environment, the nature of the job and workplace relationships. The most important factor is control over ones job—that is, over the tasks performed and the hours worked. Yet, more than half of the workforce reports having very little control over its work hours. The other factors that are most predictive of positive work and family outcomes are employee relationships with supervisors and co-workers, employee perceptions of a supportive culture, chances for advancement and the absence of employee discrimination. When these factors are positive, workers are likely to be more loyal, committed and innovative; more satisfied with their jobs; experience less burnout; and are more willing to help the company succeed, than workers who do not have these supports at work. Employees are also likely to report less work-family conflict, less stress and better coping than employees in unresponsive companies.[7]

> *In the end it comes back to the workplace. Characteristics of jobs and workplaces affect not only workers attitudes and behaviors at work, but also their general well-being and their abilities to balance work and family life. Work-family solutions will be most effective if they focus on the nature of jobs, relationships at work, and the organizational culture.*[8]

Going forward towards the year 2000, effective employer work-family initiatives will increasingly focus on variables related to the work culture, work processes and workplace relationships.

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6 Susan J. Lambert, et al., *Added Benefits: The Link Between Family-Responsive Policies and Work Performance at Fel-Pro Inc.*, University of Chicago: School of Social Service Administration (Chicago, IL), 1993.
7 The Changing Workforce, ibid., pp. 101-102.
8 The Changing Workforce, ibid., p. 101.

Stages in the Evolution of a Corporate Work-Family Agenda

In an attempt to chronicle the evolution of work-family initiatives by companies, the Families and Work Institute conducted a series of surveys and interviews to learn about the progression of efforts across industry groups. (See Table 2, Evolving Focus of Work-Life Initiatives, in the Appendix.) Three discernible stages in the evolution of a corporate work-family agenda became clear immediately. The profile of a fourth stage is emerging from research and corporate experience.

As they were reported in the 1991 *Corporate Reference Guide to Work-Family Programs*, these stages represent a snapshot in the dynamic and rapidly changing field of work and family. A look at current company work-family initiatives suggests that the stages have blended somewhat and that, especially in stages 3 and 4, the evolution is more of a complex feedback loop than a linear progression. The sharpest distinction seems to exist among those companies between Stages 2 and 3. Moving from a focus on programs to a focus on organizational change may be more difficult than introducing some work-family programs in the first place. It may become more accurate to describe two *planes* of activity, with companies in Stages 1 and 2 on one plane and companies on Stages 3 and 4 on the other. While the stages may not be as distinct as before, they are still helpful in marking the movement of corporate activity.

Stage 1

A company in Stage 1 is generally focused on child care. In a typical scenario, the company recognizes an increase in the number of women employees. Management believes that accommodating family needs may result in greater employee commitment, loyalty and fewer absences. A Stage 1 company usually defines family concerns as women's issues. As a result, a women's task force, or some newly created body comprised largely of women often assumes responsibilities for identifying needs and recommending a course of action.

In Stage 1 companies, there is usually considerable resistance to work-family policies from senior management and skepticism from other parts of the organization. Therefore, it is frequently difficult for the champions of family supports to focus company attention and resources on work-family issues. Such champions might spend considerable time uncovering data that will make the case for a bottom-line return on investment. Often, employee surveys are distributed surreptitiously, and employee groups meet without authorization to explore workplace needs and how the company might make improvements.

Once the case has been made, companies in Stage 1 typically develop one or two child care initiatives. In a typical scenario, the company might have spent considerable time justifying whether it should take any action at all, and is preoccupied with creating a child care center. Management, however, is convinced that an on-site center wont be practical or cost-effective, so the company settles on developing a referral service for finding child care, offering flexible benefits that include pretax dollars to pay for child care, and holding parenting seminars to help reduce parent employees stress. The company has developed these initiatives and assumes it has solved the problem. Now, it looks forward to returning to real business issues.

Stage 2

Companies in this stage broaden the kinds of issues they addressed in Stage 1. The CEO is more supportive of a work-family agenda than in Stage 1 and sanctions a task force called Work-Family (rather than Child Care or Women's Issues.) Work-family initiatives become the part- or full-time responsibility of someone in a newly created position called Work-Family Manager.

Expansion of flexible work arrangement policies is the hallmark of a company in Stage 2. Not only does the company change many of its existing policies, but it also offers employees more alternative work arrangements. Management training may accompany the roll-out of flexible work options, as flexibility is not considered an entitlement; rather, it is an option permitted by the manager or supervisor. A company at this stage often prints user-friendly employee handbooks describing the array of family supports offered.

Overall, in Stage 2, companies move away from a fragmentary approach to work and family policies; adopt an expanded, more integrated array of policies and programs; and give more attention to communicating these policy changes to their employees.

Stage 3

In Stage 3, companies recognize that an innovative set of policies and programs will be effective only if it exists within a supportive culture. Communication is a key component of a Stage 3 effort. For example, top management's commitment to family concerns is highly publicized: the company articulates that it owes its solidarity and strength to the sound relationship between both meeting its business goals and addressing its employees work-family concerns. Managers are encouraged to serve as role models by communicating the choices they make to balance family and career. A Stage 3 company recognizes that there are powerful communications in the ways employees are valued, promoted and rewarded. If these communications don't change, policies and programs will be ineffective, and there may be negative outcomes for those who use them.

Companies often send out mixed messages. In Stage 3, the company expends much effort on identifying and removing mixed messages to its employees, and on aligning policy with practice. For instance, the company will not only encourage employees to use alternative work arrangements or time-off policies, but will also legitimize them as viable career paths. This may require dropping concepts such as mommy tracks from the corporate thinking. To demonstrate the legitimacy of flexible work arrangements, management highlights the contribution of people on part-time or flexible arrangements and promotes the concept that it is ones contribution, not hours spent at the office, that the company values.

Usually, employees in the 30-to-40-year age group develop in their careers by focused effort and steady advancement. However, for female employees, this is an important time for child-bearing, and for both men and women, an important time for child-rearing. Therefore, a company using traditional career paths may be communicating the message that a successful career isn't compatible with being a parent. Stage 3 companies look for alternative, but equally valued, career-development paths that are compatible with life-cycle family responsibilities. In Stage 3, a company uses day-to-day management practices to support employees autonomy and decision-making, so that the discretion and judgment required for implementing flexibility will not be restricted. The company tries to align criteria for rewarding and recognizing employee achievement with the stated purpose of the organizations work-family policy. In Stage 3, a company establishes criteria for evaluating managers that includes their supportiveness of

employee needs for work-family integration and makes supervisors accountable for managing work-family conflict. The company also communicates guidelines for employees about how to set personal priorities while supporting business goals.

In Stages 1 and 2, the thrust of the business rationale for work-life efforts focuses on increasing employees productivity by reducing the distractions and problems caused by family responsibilities and work-family conflict. In Stage 3, the business rationale becomes less focused on recruitment or retention per se but rather on supporting employees well being, affirming the whole person, and, thereby, enhancing commitment, creativity and individual contributions.

In keeping with the emphasis on releasing the potential of the whole person, work-family issues must expand to embrace single employees, employees who don't have children as well as employees with elderly dependents. This is why many Stage 3 (and some Stage 2) companies change the terminology from work-family to work-life or work-personal life. In addition, this expansion conveys a strong message to include men and nontraditional families, such as gay couples, domestic partners and grandparents raising grandchildren. The impetus for this expansion of focus may come from single employees who feel put upon by the family demands of co-workers. With companies in Stage 3, though, the even more powerful motivation comes from an evolving recognition that helping all employees create more balance between their work and personal lives is a necessary part of creating an effective workplace.

To create a Stage 3 awareness, companies must examine their communications and seek to align all messages, both formal and informal, with a work-family perspective. They may focus on messages and communications to employees about the company's commitment to work-family issues; to managers about the business rationale for investment in work-family issues; and to the community about their commitment to the quality of life. Stage 3 communications initiatives may include:

- Conducting an audit of all corporate communications to identify key cultural messages, paying particular attention to career development and recruiting materials, performance review criteria, and company image as it is conveyed in marketing literature (including the annual report).
- Revising the company's mission statement to include a statement of commitment to the well-being of employees and their families.

- Using senior management communications to reinforce and sanction the idea that the company values employees personal lives. For example, relating anecdotes or personal statements in speeches and presentations—the more often the better.
- Showing off senior management as role models in the community and in business. This may require coaching senior managers in how they can better walk the talk.
- Documenting and showcasing managers who exhibit best practices of flexibility and supportiveness in in-house communications vehicles.
- Supporting and showcasing employee role models who work nontraditional hours, emphasizing their contributions and how they work with clients and co-workers.
- Designing marketing and sales materials that align with employee diversity efforts and the company's work-family values.
- Training ombudsmen to help employees identify available resources in the organization that deal with work-family issues and negotiate with managers and work teams.
- Coordinating efforts throughout the year to publicly support a range of family-supportive agencies in the community.

Stage 3 emphasizes linkages with and synergy between work-family efforts and other functions and strategic initiatives within the organization. In making these linkages, the work-family label occasionally falls away and is replaced by compatible terminology from the fields of organization effectiveness, quality improvement or management development. Without strategic linkages such as these, work-family issues are not likely to be understood as essential to the business. Making these connections requires people who have both a work-family and business perspective and who can use language that reflects their understanding of different perspectives. Linkage initiatives include:

- Auditing all ongoing functions and initiatives that address work-family goals (both implicitly or explicitly) and identifying priorities for creating new collaborations and synergy.
- Incorporating work-family messages into core management training.
- Revising career development materials and performance criteria to reflect work-family concerns.
- Including work-family questions on climate surveys, 360 feedback and all employee-sensing instruments.

- Selecting and rewarding managers not only for task management, but also for their people skills and support of employees personal lives.
- Creating a dialogue and relationships for synergy and common goals with employees who represent diversity, quality improvement, technology, reorganization, line managers, Board of Trustees, senior management group, recruiters, facilities managers, Government affairs, EAP, R&D, and marketing.

Clearly, Stage 3 focuses on valuing employees and relationships in the organization. The only way to introduce flexibility into the organization without career penalties is to trust employees—and to trust supervisors to use good judgment in balancing the varied needs of individuals with the ongoing need to get the work done. As noted above, research finds that a climate of trust and support is often essential if employees are to have a sense of well-being, balance, and commitment to their jobs.

A set of strategies emerges when companies start thinking about how to engender a climate of trust among employees and between managers and employees. For example:

- Encouraging employees to initiate local experiments, or pilots, to try new ways to meet the varied needs of work teams and individuals. In the spirit of any learning experience, employees must feel that its safe to experiment and to learn from mistakes as well as successes.
- Examining practices to see where individual autonomy and decision-making are needlessly restricted or penalized. Liberalizing attendance and lateness policies to emphasize personal responsibility rather than focus on negative behavior.
- Applying the principles of empowerment to individual time management. When evaluating people, emphasizing outcomes rather than time spent at the office.
- Amending performance reviews to include support for flexibility and creative problem-solving of work-family tensions.
- Giving employee teams the authority to negotiate flexible work arrangements and resolve their work-family conflicts.
- Training employee teams in how to help each other resolve work-family conflicts.

Stage 4

As a company becomes more aware of how its work-family goals contribute to its culture, communications, and business goals, the logical next step is to focus on work processes themselves. Just as programs and policies are not effective unless they're carried out in a supportive culture, the real test of cultural values is in how they hold up as employees perform tasks and work together. At their most fundamental level, both the source of and the solution to work-family problems are linked to how the customer is served, how projects are planned and staffed, how work is scheduled, and how day-to-day problems are handled. Thus, another stage is emerging, in which the focus shifts to work processes, and how companies can bring a work-family perspective to daily operations and task management.

In Stage 4, companies have an opportunity to support creative flexibility, to identify and correct inconsistencies between family-supportive messages and unsupportive business expectations, and to partner with their employees in reengineering efforts. As a company moves into Stage 4, it starts asking some of the following questions:

- What assumptions do our work processes make about peoples availability and time?
- What work-life issues arise from our method of service delivery? Can we make changes within our infrastructure that would enhance our service delivery as well as our employees lives?
- Are there inefficiencies in how we direct our employees to plan and conduct their work? Could we be more respectful and considerate of our employees time and still meet customer needs?
- Is the work staffed appropriately? Are our work expectations and timelines realistic? Who pays the price if they're unrealistic: the employee? the customer? the company itself?
- When problems arise, what is our approach to solving them? Does this approach entail employee work-life considerations?
- What changes would help employee teams work together more effectively?

Moving Across the Stages

Companies at Stages 1 and 2 have taken giant steps in understanding how family issues affect the workplace and what supports they can offer to reduce the negative impact of work-family conflict. However, for most Stage 1 and 2 companies, work-family issues are viewed as individual accommodations to be meted out by managers. As a result, large groups of individuals, not wanting to ask for favors or accommodations in a time of high job insecurity, do not make their concerns known. Thus, meeting family needs remains a marginal activity, largely disconnected from broader organizational goals.

The notion of work-family support as an accommodation leads to some of the problems with current practice. Employee accommodations, after all, are exceptions. They are reserved for only the most deserving or highly valued employees. If companies perceive work-family supports as favors, then the benefit is seen as going to the recipients, not the organization that offers them. And since accommodations *are* exceptions to the rules, companies expect payback or quid pro quo. Hence, flexible work arrangements are perceived as rewards for good performance.

However, when viewed as a business *strategy*, rather than an employee accommodation, work-family efforts take on a different quality—because a strategy benefits the organization. Instead of being reserved for special situations or available only on demand, work-family policy begins to be considered as a standard operating procedure. Far from being rationed, a strategy is *promoted*, precisely because the more it is understood and the more it is used, the more the organization will benefit. When a company moves into Stages 3 and 4, it creates the opportunity for flexibility and other work-family efforts to become organizational strategies rather than individual employee accommodations.

The promotion of corporate attention to work-family issues, especially in Stages 1 and 2, has been made on the basis of what's good for business, but often in a way that overlooks the employees family needs. The relationship between the organization and the individual is depicted as one-directional. Addressing work and family issues, therefore, means removing any distractions or inconveniences that might get in the way of the employees job performance. The intent of corporate work-family policies and practices is to make employees more available for

work, absent less often, less distracted and less conflicted by family demands. By design, these policies exact more hours from employees and greater productivity for the company.

These contradictions have led to some ironic definitions of what is family-friendly. There are companies on *Working Mothers* list of best companies that, in addition to having exemplary work-family policies, give awards to outstanding employees because they stay up all night and all weekend working. In the end, what is created is an awkward value structure that gives priority to the organization over the individual, but never realizes that the organizations needs are not being met because the individuals needs have been ignored or sacrificed.

While Stage 3 and 4 companies emphasize the strategic corporate benefits of work-family efforts, they also view their employees more holistically. Instead of looking only at the worker aspect of people, they try to see work and family from the employees perspective—as parts of a whole. Unlike companies in Stages 1 and 2, companies in Stages 3 and 4 are moving toward a more ecological view of what goes on in the lives of today's workers. Since employees commitments and expectations have changed along with changes in the traditional employer-employee contract, companies need to better focus on what it takes to inspire an individuals full contribution. Stages 3 and 4 acknowledge the fundamental reciprocity among families, the broader society and business results. Companies at these stages begin to ask questions such as: If work hours are strictly defined, do people feel trusted and will they take more initiative? If rewards and recognition are linked strongly to the number of hours worked, where do quality, creativity and flexibility fit it? If a woman on maternity leave is encouraged to come back to work sooner than she or her baby are ready, will she be productive at work?

Conclusion

A work-family perspective can provide a powerful lens for understanding organizations, but the opportunity is often obscured by mixed messages that exist between stated policies and the actual corporate culture. These inconsistencies sideline family issues at the workplace. Despite impressive growth in the number and types of work-family programs in companies today, most employers still consider work-family issues to be diversions from the real strategic aims of the organization or, at best, some simple add-ons that can boost morale for survivors of a downsizing. Reengineering efforts do not incorporate work-family concerns, and a work-family perspective is rarely used as a lever for change.

As companies deal with the changes brought on by globalization and technology, management must think of family needs as more than something to be appeased or accommodated. A terminology and perspective that focuses only on programmatic efforts is inadequate. Programmatic solutions do not respect the complexity of the relationship between work and family nor do they take into account the sources of conflict lying deep within the organizational infrastructure. Research and company experience are beginning to reveal that *effective* solutions call for fundamental changes in how employees are valued, assessed, managed, trained and promoted. The focus must be on trying to understand the work environment, cultural norms, managerial practices, and work processes—that is, the factors that have been shown to be the strongest predictors of work-family conflict and stress, as well as negative work behaviors.

The notion of reciprocity speaks to the need for a more ecological view of what goes on the lives of workers today. They cannot be segmented into their roles as workers and parents for specific hours of the day. Rather, employees are whole human beings, whose desires for fulfillment at home and at work are inextricably linked—and must be acknowledged if the employer is to benefit from their full contribution.

Appendix

Table 1

Prevalence of Work-Family Programs in Companies

Rank	Program Description	Percent of Companies Offering Program
1	Part-time Schedules	87.8%
2	Employee Assistance Programs	85.6
3	Personal Days	77.4
4	Flextime	77.1
5	Personal Leaves of Absence	70.4
6	Child Care Resource and Referral	54.5
7	Spouse Employment Assistance	51.9
8	DCAPs (Dependent Care Assistance Plans)	49.5
9	Job-Sharing Arrangements	47.9
10	Flexplace	35.1
11	Family, Child Care Leaves for Mothers*	28.0
12	Family Counseling in Relocation	26.9
13	Work-Family Seminars	25.7
14	Cafeteria Benefits	25.1
15	Wellness/Health Programs	23.4
16	Elder Care Consultation and Referral	21.1
17	Adoption Benefits	15.7
18	Child Care Centers	13.0
19	Work-Family Management Training	9.6
20	Work-Family Support Groups	5.3
21	Corporate Foundation Giving	5.3
22	Family Illness Days	4.8
23	Discounts for Child Care	4.8
24	Sick Child Care	4.3
25	Work-Family Coordinators	3.2
26	Work-Family Handbooks	2.7
27	Long Term Care Insurance	2.1
28	Consortium Centers for Child Care	1.6
29	On-site Caregiver Fairs	1.6
30	Vouchers for Child Care	1.1

Note: Ranking does not include disability leaves for new mothers, which are available in 100% of the companies surveyed.

* Family and child care leave policies for mothers that are also available to fathers are found in 22.3% of the companies, and are extended to adoptive parents in 23.4% of the companies. Policies that include extended care for relatives are available in 16.0% of the companies. These variations are not counted separately in the above table.

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Appendix

Table 2

Evolving Focus of Work-Life Initiatives

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
COMMITMENT	Grassroots	Human Resources	Culture Change	Work Redesign
	• A champion exists, with little support from top management	• More top level support • Target managers to be more sensitive and aware	• Critical top-level and middle management support	• Recognition that work-family is integral to key business decisions and design of work processes • Target front-line supervisors
PROCESS	Identify the Problem	Centralize Responsibility	Align and Mainstream Concepts	Embed in Work Processes
	• Child care or women's task force begins inquiry • Needs assessment	• Task force on work-family • Instituting work family manager • Communicating policies	• Task force on work-life • Mission revised • Synergy with other strategic aims	• Task force on people/human effectiveness • Work redesign and reengineering involves Human Resources
INITIATIVES	Programmatic	Integrated	Strategic	Fundamental
	• Defined as a woman's issue • Child care is primary focus • Usually some form of dependent care assistance	• Focus on the life cycle of employees • Packaging of policies and programs • Flexible work arrangements	• Eliminate mixed messages • Publicize role models • Performance reviews include work-family objectives	• Alternative career paths • 360 degrees of feedback • Work teams have responsibility for individual scheduling
COMMUNITY FOCUS	Shared Information	Project-Based Collaboration	System-Wide Collaboration	Contributions through People
	• Attend conferences • Learn about community marketplace • Identify experts	• Consortia	• Participation on planning/ policy committees • American Business Collaborative efforts • Dedicated funds	• Volunteer efforts • Targeted philanthropic agenda